DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 244 915 SP 024 347

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TITLE Rhythmic Gymnastics: A Challenge with Balls and Ropes.
PUB DATE 30 Mar 84
NOTE 19p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (Anaheim, CA, March 29-April 2, 1984).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Dance; Elementary Secondary Education; *Gymnastics; *Manipulative Materials; Motor Development; *Movement Education; *Physical Activities; Physical Education; Psychomotor Skills
IDENTIFIERS *Rhythmic Gymnastics

ABSTRACT

Rhythmic gymnastics is an outgrowth of rhythmic and dance gymnastics and promotes good posture, strength, flexibility, balance, and coordination, along with appreciation of music and movement together. The current status of rhythmic gymnastics and its historical development are briefly discussed. Descriptions are given of rhythmic gymnastic activities involving basic movements and practice with balls, ropes, hoops, and ribbons attached to wands. The composition of routines for rhythmic gymnastic activities and their application and use in current physical education programs are discussed. (JD)

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RHYTHMIC GYMNASTICS: A CHALLENGE WITH BALLS AND ROPES

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FOR

COUNCIL ON PHYSICAL EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN
AMERICAN ALLIANCE FOR HEALTH, PHYSICAL EDUCATION, RECREATION, AND DANCE
NATIONAL CONVENTION
ANAHEIM, CALIFORNIA
MARCH 30, 1984

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SP024 347

Goals of Session

As a result of attending this session, the participants will:

1. Learn about one of the newest additions to the '84 Olympics
2. Have discovered an activity appropriate for all ages
3. Have experienced an activity that will promote total fitness
4. Be able to implement the basics of Rhythmic Gymnastics into their own programs.

Outline of Session

I. Introduction

- A. Current status of Rhythmic Gymnastics (RG)
- B. Historical development
- C. Fitness values specific to RG
- D. Equipment of RG

II. Balls, III. Ropes, IV. Hoops, V. Ribbons

- A. Basic movements and practice
- B. Routine composition
- C. Application and use in current programs

V. Closing

- A. Summary of session
  1. Verbal discussion
  2. Physical activity
- B. Large group performance as a culmination of the session

The concept of rhythmic gymnastics today, often referred to as RG, is an outgrowth of rhythmic and dance gymnastics, which developed from natural gymnastics. Currently only women are competing in RG, which is fine. However, due to the contribution in the areas of physiological and motor fitness, this activity certainly has a place in today's physical education curriculum for both sexes and all ages.

Rhythmic gymnastics are designed to promote both physical fitness and skill development. The apparatus (balls, ropes, ribbons, hoops, and clubs) associated with RG is quite appealing to children. Challenging rhythmical activities presented under the guise of a qualified instructor will do much to reinforce a child's fondness for physical activity. Elementary physical education needs to incorporate activities into its programs that indeed can contribute to overall physical fitness, and RG appears to meet the necessary qualifications. RG promotes good posture, strength, flexibility, balance, and coordination. It also promotes an appreciation of music and movement together, while simultaneously stressing movement that is natural, free, and rhythmical.

Rhythmic gymnastics got started in Russia as a competitive sport for women in the early 1950's. In Eastern Europe at this time, the activity was referred to as artistic gymnastics. In June 1962 the Federation of International Gymnastics recognized it as an independent sport and in 1972 the name was changed from modern gymnastics to modern rhythmic gymnastics.

RG has always placed a strong emphasis on natural, total body movement and the rhythmic flow of motion. Some of the people that stressed natural movement during the 18th and 19th centuries were Jean Jacques Rousseau, Johann Basedow, Johann Gutsmuth, and Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi. Early supporters of rhythmic gymnastics in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were Jacques Dalcroze, Rudolf Bode, and Hinrich Medau. Concurrently with the development of gymnastic's programs was the development of programs in natural dance. The natural dance movement included such people as Isadora Dunca, Rudolf Laban, and Mary Wigman. The work of all of these people has had a great influence on the development of RG.

All sports revolve around rhythm. In fact, the ability to control this rhythm is the ingredient that often makes one team or individual more successful than another. Mastery of free flowing movement in and through space is difficult enough, but when equipment is added, then this level of mastery becomes a much more difficult goal to achieve. It is this challenge that the equipment of RG has presented to the participant that really makes rhythmic gymnastics so valuable and exciting for all ages.

When one begins to incorporate RG into their programs, there are still certain basics that should always be included, such as a warm-up period. The warm-up should include activities that will aid in developing strength in the arms, trunk, and legs. In addition, time should be devoted to swinging exercises, locomotor exercises, and

combination movements. During the opening activities is a good time to practice the dance movements that will be used later on with the equipment.

After warm-ups are over then practice with the various pieces of equipment begins. A brief discussion of some suggestions to try on the various pieces of equipment will follow. As one becomes immersed in RG it soon becomes apparent that the number of things that can be done with the equipment are only limited by one's imagination. One other aspect of RG that soon becomes apparent is that many of the RG moves are identical to those found in many sports.

A piece of equipment that tends to motivate both sexes quite well are balls. Many RG moves with balls are found in a wide variety of sports. Throwing and catching can be done individually and with a partner, while stressing involvement of one's whole body in the movement. Balls can also be rolled on various parts of the body with practice. Throwing and catching can be done while one is stationary or on the move. Balls can be rolled on the floor while the child travels in a variety of ways along with the rolling ball. Throwing and turning and throwing and leaping are combined movements that are often done with balls. Ball bouncing while stressing that one have their entire body bouncing in time with the ball gives this activity new meaning. Bouncing a ball can be done while sitting, kneeling, standing, turning, under the leg and while walking. Balls can be rolled on the floor while the child travels in a variety of ways along with the rolling ball. They can also be rolled under the legs, chest, and around the body while kneeling, standing, running, and leaping. A seven- or eight-inch playground ball is a good size ball to use with children.

Ropes are not always a favorite with young boys, but if presented as a challenge to boys, ropes may turn out to be a favorite. Ropes can contribute to one's flexibility if the teacher emphasizes bringing the arms up over the head in a large circle while turning. Traditionally we've always kept our arms by our sides while rope jumping, but in RG, the arms may at times move all the way around. All of the locomotor and combination movements (gallop, slide, and skip) should be taught with the ropes as well as dance steps such as the polka and schottische. Crossing movements and double turns are emphasized just as in the past. Partner work is another possibility with all of these movements. Ropes can be folded and a knot tied in the middle and then it can be used as a wand. All the same throwing and catching activities can be done as were done with the balls. When purchasing a rope, buy the 3/8-inch cotton variety. Length is determined by holding the ends in hands with arms straight out from sides. The rope should then hit just below the calf of the leg usually 8- to 10-foot lengths. This method for determining length results in a little longer rope than from previous methods of determining appropriate rope length.

There are a multitude of possibilities for hoops. Arm swings with the hoops are great as well as throwing and catching emphasizing maximum extension. Swings may be done in frontal, sagittal, and horizontal

planes. Swings may also be done changing hands and under the leg. Hoops may be spun on the floor and rolled on the floor while the child moves around them. Hoops may also be used for jumping activities similiar to those done with ropes. Finally, partners can work together doing all of these movements. Hoops may be purchased commercially, but can also be made with PVC pipe. Simply cut the pipe to the desired length, heat the ends in hot water and insert a plug to join the ends. Hoops are usually 30 to 35 inches in diameter. All of the supplies for hoops can be purchased in a hardware store.

Ribbons lend themselves to beautiful movements. All of the equipment in RG is used as an extension of the body, but none looks more like an extension of the body than ribbons. They too can be done individually or with a partner. Swinging movements are basic to working with ribbons. Swings are done forward and backward across the body, overhead, forward and backward under the leg and in circling movements to list a few. The circling movements can be done in the frontal, sagittal, and horizontal planes. Some other basic movements are figure eights, serpentine movements (up and down), Spiral movements, and throwing and catching. Ribbons of 10 to 15 feet in length can be attached to a 20-inch stick about 3/8 inch in diameter using a swivel to help eliminate twisting.

Some other pieces of equipment used in RG are clubs. A new plastic or wooden club for competition in rhythmic gymnastics is now available. These new clubs are much lighter and safer for children than the former heavy wooden Indian clubs. Flags and scarves can be found in a variety of shapes and sizes and virtually all are acceptable for rhythmic activities.

As was mentioned earlier, the variety of movements that you do with the equipment is only limited by the imagination of the teacher and don't forget the children's ideas. It is hoped that this will stimulate others to try an activity that has not been traditionally found in our physical education programs.

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RHYTHMIC GYMNASTICS ACTIVITIES

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RG - WARM-UP

General (cardiovascular)

- Jogging w/variance in direction
- Combination movements
- Ballet type movements

Stretching

- General, large muscles
- Then to specific joints
- Hips and shoulders
- Upper & lower back
- Wrists & fingers
- Ankles
  - Splits - alone & with a partner
  - Enlocates & dislocates
  - Back bends, inside outs

Strength and Endurance

- Pushups, pull-ups,
- Sit-ups, circuits

Sprints

Jumping

- Tuck jumps
- Split jumps
- Pike jumps
- Jumps with full twists
- Intersperse with rolls

RG - BALLS - 7 to 8 inches in diameter

Throwing and Catching

- 2 hands, 1 hand, front to back, side to side,
- Under legs, under arm, behind shoulder,
- Catch on back of hands, throw & run, throw & leap, throw & turn, partner toss

Bouncing

- Drop ball w/arm swing
- Drop ball from overhead and spin
- Bounce in a sitting position, kneeling, standing
- Bounce in a rhythm (1/4, 1/8, 1/2, notes)
- Bounce and turn
- Under leg
- While walking, running, combinations,
- With a leap, scissor kick, partners

Rolling

- V-sit, prone chest raise, kneeling, standing
- Run w/roll, run and leap, tour jete overball
- Roll on arm (1 & 2), on the legs, on the back
- To a partner

Swinging
- Forward & backward, pendular, sagittal plane, frontal plane
- Body wave
- Around the body
- Figure 8's one and both arms

Balancing
- Spiral and screw - while turning

Two-Balls
- 2 balls - throw, alternately, same, bounce

Routines should include:
- Slow & fast
- 1 min to 1½ min's
- Proper rhythm
- Continuity of exercise
- Sureness
- Elegance of execution

Task: * Small groups make up a routine that includes
1. Throwing & catching
   Bouncing
   Swinging
   Balancing
   Rolling
2. Different levels
3. At least 2 ball exchanges

Use: * Fitness routines or openings to lessons
Partner and group work

Sample Routine:
1. Body wave toss and catch
2. 8 running steps with 4 bounces
3. Balance
4. Swing figure 8
5. Roll on floor and travel beside
6. Pick ball up - body wave toss and catch
7. Bounce from side to side
8. 4 running steps with one toss and catch and end in a balance

RG ROPES - 3/8 inch rope, 8 to 10 feet in length
Jumping movements
- Basics, loco's and comb's
- Pendular swinging
- Crossing
- Doubles, triples
- Squat jumping
- Schottische
- Polka
- Scissor kick, cabriole's
- Leaps
- Horizontal
- Forward to backward turning
- Folded rope moves
- Partner jumping

Swings - planes
- Sitting
- Figure 8's
- Swing & jump
- Swing in varying rhythms

Circling around body

Wraps

Spiral and screw

Balances hooked on foot

Tossing & catching & with a partner

Practice
- waves across room
- diagonals across room

Routines should include:
- Jumping
- Swinging
- Tossing and catching

- Use different planes
- 2 exchanges
- Use different levels
- Keep rope moving

Sample Routine:
1. four forward jumps in place while the body turns one 360° circle
2. Eight running steps (one rope turn per step)
3. With folded rope, figure 8 on one side and figure 8 on the other side
4. Backward rope turn four times while jumping and body turns 360° in place
5. Eight skips forward
6. Arabesque
7. Figure 8 overhead, toss and catch
8. Run, run, run, leap, run, run, run, leap
9. Release one end, swing and wrap around body

RG HOOPS: - 30 to 35 inches in diameter, wooden or plastic.

Grips - Regular, reverse, inside, outside, mixed

Plane - Frontal, sagittal, horizontal

Swings - Across body, change hands (in front and behind)
- Overhead change, under the legs
- Forward & backward
- Swing to a back bend
- Around the body
- Overhead - horizontal
- Figure 8's - all planes

Poses

Turning Movements -
- in all planes
- Horizontal spins
- Vertical spins

Circling movements
- poses while circling
- all planes

Throwing and catching
- One and two hands
- Overhead, behind back
- Circle and throw over head
- Behind shoulder
- Throw into air horizontal spin
- Throw and leap
- Throwing with a partner

Rolling Movements
- Frontal plane
- Run and roll and move
- Roll with backspin, in a circle
- Roll on body parts

Jumps - leaps, pendular swings, lateral turns

Routines should include:
- Swinging
- Turning
- Circling *
- Throwing and catching *
- Rolling *
- Jumping

* Must have these 3
- Use different planes
- 2 exchanges
- Use different levels
- Keep the hoop moving

Sample Routine:
1. Four running steps and four jumps
2. Toss and catch and swing into a pose
3. Swing and toss and swing and toss
4. Roll and follow for 8 counts
5. Catch and swing into a pose
6. Swing into a floor spin
7. Catch and circle the body
8. Take a pose

RG RIBBONS - approximately a 20 foot satin ribbon 1-3/4 to 2-1/2 in width attached to a wood or bamboo stick 20 to 23 inches in length. The ribbon is attached with a short string (2-3/4 inches), a fish swivel, or something similar that will keep the ribbon from twisting.

Swinging Movements:
- Forward and backward
- Across body
- Overhead
- Forward and overhead (Split leap, hop, scale, lunge)
- Under the leg
- Swing and catch
- With 2 ribbons

Circling Movements:
- Circle in frontal plane, sagittal, horizontal
- Under the leg
- Over the head and under the leg
- Two ribbons

Figure 8 movements:
- Frontal Plane, sagittal, horizontal
- Leap over the ribbon

Serpentine Movements:
- Vertical, horizontal
- Turns with serpentine

Spiral Movements:
- Vertical or floor, in air, overhead
- Frontal circle with spiral
- Spirals with increasing circles
- Spirals with decreasing circles
- Spirals with 2 ribbons

Throwing and Catching:
- Swing toss overhead
- Overhead throw
- 2 ribbons

Routines should include:
- Serpentines
- Figure Eights
- Spiral swinging
- Circling
- Optional Throwing and catching
- L & R hands

Sample Routine:
1. Figure 8's on both sides of the body
2. circle and run 8 steps
3. Toss and catch
4. Serpentine and turn
5. run 8 steps while spiraling on the floor
6. Toss and catch
7. Swing big circles in sagittal plane on both sides
8. Vertical serpentine up and down and pose

RG - CLUBS - either wood or plastic bottle shape with long narrow neck about 16 to 19 inches in length and weighing approximately 7 to 8 inches in length and weighing approximately 7 to 8 ounces.

Routines should include:

Swinging and circling movements:
- in all planes
- large (shoulder initiated)
- medium (elbow initiated)
- small (wrist initiated)
- simultaneously or alternating
- add locomotors and combinations
- figure eight's

Throwing and Catching:
- Try to catch the head or body of the club

Tapping and Clapping - together and on the floor

Balances (Poses)

Tips:
- Learn moves with one club first, equally well with both hands, before adding two
- Work at different levels, tempos, directions, etc.
- Do partner and group work

Sample Routine:
1. Pose and clap over head 4 times
2. Run and toss and catch for 4 steps
3. Full swings in sagittal planes twice
4. Toss and catch
5. Run and circle for 8 counts
6. Stop and tap on floor twice and clap over the head twice
7. Horizontal circles twice and pose

Games - Developmental & Creative

This section will include lead up activities and games appropriate for both the beginner and upper level students. The activities included are not only great starter activities, but also many can be used later to help promote creativity with the apparatus at a more advanced level.

There are a great number of activities that should and could be done with all of the apparatus. They will be discussed first and then activities appropriate for each piece of equipment will be discussed.

General Basics - Remember to develop good movers in all the basic movements before adding equipment.

Feathering - Be sure that students completely understand the concept of total, natural body movement when feathering. Students should practice feathering first without and then with the equipment.

Effort - When setting tasks, change the effort aspect (time, force, space, and flow) of the task, so as to help students develop to their maximum; such as moving lightly and slowly, heavy and slow, light and fast, heavy and fast, etc.

Space - Always make sure that students are successful when working in their own spaces, before they move in and through the empty spaces. Whenever possible, allow students a chance to develop skills in their own spaces first.

Varying tempos - Once students can move to their own "built in tempos," give them a chance to move to 3/4, 6/8, 4/4, and 2/4 tempos. Vary the tempos to enhance the quality of the movement. Music can be in the form of recorded music or percussion of some kind. There is certainly nothing wrong with having students accompany themselves or others with percussion instruments.

Dance Steps - Teach dance steps, such as the polka, schottische, grapevine, two-step, etc., that can be used with the apparatus. Remember not to add the equipment too soon. If the skip, gallop, and slide have not been introduced by now, add them also.

Routines - The bottom line in rhythmic gymnastics is the development of routines. Promote connecting movements together to find the many different combinations that they can produce. Start with putting together two moves and continue to add more for longer routines. Individual routines at the competitive level are a minute to a minute and a half in duration.

Groups - Partner, small, and large group work are all an integral part of rhythmic gymnastics at the competitive level. Group routines are two and a half to three minutes in duration. Group work is important for all ages. In the beginning start in groups of two and progress in size from there. Routines are not only done in groups with one kind of apparatus for all, but also with combinations of equipment. Give your students a chance to experiment and see what they can come up with on their own.

Relays - There is some hesitation in mentioning relays; however, all of the apparatus can be used in relay formations. Relays are included because young people do enjoy the competition that results from them, if handled properly. Relays can be a good culminating activity to a lesson and a lot of fun too.

Ropes

Different Jumps - Each person shows a new jump to the class. This activity could even be done competitively.

Disco and Line Dances - Develop routines that can be done as a line or group dance to popular music. All dance work and movement to varying rhythms that was done earlier will now be seen on a higher level.

Shapes - Make shapes on the floor with the rope and then copy with the body.

Rope Dance - Make a pattern on the floor with the rope and then use this pattern to choreograph a dance with the rope pattern providing the floor pattern for the dance.

Folded Rope - Fold the rope twice and tie a knot in the center. Now the rope can be used like a wand or ball for throwing and catching or whatever.

Quietest Movers - Set movement tasks with the rope and stress movement that is effortless and makes no sounds.

Toss and Catch - See which group can toss and catch the most times without dropping the rope. Set tasks that would promote developing new and inventive throws and catches.

Balancing - Promote new and varied balances with the rope through Simon Says or going around room and having each student show a new one for all to try.

Across, Over, Around, In and Out - Practice going across the rope stretched out on the floor in a variety of ways or finding different ways to be over the rope or traveling along the rope. By making a circle with the rope, students can find new ways of going in and out of the circle or around the circle or over the circle.

*Remember to vary the tempo for movement, make sure students use all the dance steps and that you stress being a quiet mover with no rope slapping on the floor. Also, just as with the ball, promote routine development individually, with a partner, and in groups and always reward creativity positively!

Balls

Tossing and catching - In the beginning simply toss and catch in one's own space stressing movement without noise. Then do the same moving in and through space. Then in one's own space toss and clap and catch or toss and turn and catch, but now stress total body extension with the toss and a catch that can't be heard with full body collapse that slows the ball gradually. Tossing and catching tasks should be presented to the student that promote activity that shows variety in the effort category of movement.

Dead Ball - This a challenge to the student to see how well they can coordinate their movements with the ball. The teacher calls "dead ball," the students throw the ball straight up and allow it to bounce until it stops (dead ball). While the ball is bouncing the student mimics the ball moves with their body until both they and the ball are still.

Bounce and Run - See how many times a student can pass under a bouncing ball before the ball hits them.

Loco-Combo - The ball movements should be practiced while executing both the locomotor and combination movements.

Swing Game - Set tasks that seek contrasts from the biggest swing to the smallest swing, fastest to slowest, etc.

Bounce Contest - See who can bounce ball at the lowest level or highest level or the most ways without losing control.

Ball Roller - Set tasks for moving along beside a rolling ball on the floor, such as, staying with the ball, execute one stunt, multiple stunts, or create new moves to execute with the rolling ball.

Balance game - Promote developing new and varied balances with the ball, suggest balancing at low levels, high levels, and on different combinations of body parts as a base.

Percussion Instrument - The ball can be used as a percussion instrument to bring out the natural rhythm of the accompaniment by slapping and bouncing the ball.

Routines - Start youngsters putting together movements right away. Set tasks that require this, such as swings that connect to a toss to a bounce and catch to a roll. Promote creativity at all times.

*Don't forget, after trying these alone, then try them with a partner and then in small groups.

Hoops

Floor Hoop - With hoop on the floor, have students move in and out, around, and over the hoop. Stress variety and changes in the effort aspect of movement when setting the task.

Hoop Roller - Roll the hoop on the floor in a line or in a circle. While doing this, first have students see if they can stay with the hoop, then have them execute one movement or stunt while traveling along with the hoop and then see if they can do more.

Hoop Spinner - Spin the hoop and see if students can travel at same speed around the hoop. Then have students execute first one and then more stunts as they move.

Dead Hoop - Spin the hoop and have student mimic the hoop movement staying with the hoop until it and the student's body are still ("dead").

Toss and Catch - Promote unique tossing and catching patterns in place and then moving in and through the spaces.

Circling - Each student introduces a new way to circle the hoop to the class.

In and Out - Partner game. Partners go in and out of the hoop simultaneously while the teacher changes the task each time, such as, lead with a small body part this time, lead with a large body part this time, lead with your sitters this time, do it in slow motion this time and quickly this time.

Catepillar - Stand all students in a line with hoops and hold them over on the ground beside each student to form a long "caterpillar" with the hoops. Then pretending that it's a tunnel, let the students crawl through the hoops.

Flower Garden - (Can be done with the balls too) - Hold the hoop on the ground and squat inside the hoop and grow up tall and hold the hoop up as the flower. Then sway back and forth in the wind or whatever you chose.

Musical Hoops - (Can be done with the ropes too) - Simply play a game like musical chairs, but now use hoops.

Ponies in the Stables - (Can be done with ropes too) - Have students move in a variety of ways through the open spaces and then on the command "Ponies in the stables," all return to their original hoop.

*Don't forget to start routine development soon and practice the skills individually, with a partner, and in groups.

Ribbons

When developing tasks or games to use with the ribbons, be sure and include swings, circling moves, serpentines, spirals, throwing and catching and activities with two ribbons. When doing these activities, remember to vary the effort aspect of movement, such as moving fast and slow with large or small circles while changing levels and directions. Practice the movements in place and then moving in and through space. Throwing and catching can be done with a partner and as a contest with others with one or two ribbons per group. As with all of the equipment,stress developing moves with both the right and left hands. Get students combining moves right away and this in itself can be a game. Remember to have students work alone, with a partner and in groups when developing their skills with the ribbon.

Clubs

The clubs are experiencing a rebirth in physical education circles. Once used for their contributions to fitness routines, they have sprung up again with the same focus. Clubs assist greatly in swinging and circling moves that would be classified as flexibility exercises. They can also provide a resistance to movement that can aid in toning up the musculature. Clubs may have been one of our earliest forms of aerobic dance, which perhaps is not as new as we think. When making up routines, include swings, circling, figure eights, throwing and catching and

clapping and tapping movements. Caution should be taken when introducing throwing and catching to little children, being sure they they are competent with the other movements before introducing throwing and catching. Again, promote individual, partner, group work, and creativity.